NEWS ANALYSIS 1-1162 JULY 27, 1976
JOHN ALBERT

A YEAR AFTER HELSINKI

ANNCR:

NEXT SUNDAY (AUGUST FIRST) WILL MARK EXACTLY ONE YEAR SINCE REPRESENTATIVES OF THIRTY-FIVE NATIONS ASSEMBLED AT HELSINKI SIGNED THE FINAL ACT OF THAT CONFERENCE ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE. VOA NEWS ANALYST JOHN ALBERT LOOKS AT THE ACTIONS THAT HAVE -- AND HAVE NOT -- FOLLOWED THOSE SOLEMN DECLARATIONS:

VOICE:

THE RESULTS OF THE HELSINKI CONFERENCE HAVE BEEN CONSISTENTLY UNDERRATED BY ONE GROUP AND OVERVALUED BY ANOTHER. SOME PEOPLE ARGUE THAT THE CONFERENCE ACHIEVED ONLY WESTERN ACQUIESCENCE TO SOVIET DOMINATION OF EASTERN EUROPE, A RECOGNITION OF THE CONTINENT'S DIVISION INTO EASTERN AND WESTERN CAMPS AND THEIR EXISTING FRONTIERS.

BUT THESE CRITICS OVERLOOK TWO BASIC FACTS. FIRST OF ALL, THE HELSINKI CONFERENCE, WHOSE DECLARATIONS ARE IN NO WAY LEGALLY BINDING, HAS NOT CHANGED THE ACTUAL FACE OF EUROPE IN ANY WAY. NOR HAS IT RECOGNIZED THE INVIOLABILITY OF EXISTING FRONTIERS, AS THE SOVIET UNION WANTED IT TO DO. ON THE CONTRARY, THE WESTERN NATIONS, WITH A STRONG ASSIST FROM THE NON-ALIGNED COUNTRIES, OBTAINED CONFERENCE RECOGNITION OF THE BASIC PRINCIPLE OF PEACEFUL CHANGE OF FRONTIERS. BEYOND THIS, THE SOVIET UNION HAD TO ACCEPT LANGUAGE THAT SETS FORTH IN GREAT DETAIL THE OBLIGATION OF EACH SIGNATORY TO RESPECT THE INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY OF EVERY COUNTRY, LARGE OR SMALL. THIS IN ITSELF HAS NOT REMOVED THE THREAT OF SOVIET INTERFERENCE IN THE INTERNAL AFFAIRS OF EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES, BASED ON THE SO-CALLED BREZHNEV DOCTRINE, BUT IT HAS

CERTAINLY ENCOURAGED OTHER COMMUNIST LEADERS TO REJECT SOVIET DOMINATIO DOMINATION OF THEIR MOVEMENT. THE EXPRESSIONS OF GREAT INDEPENDENCE, WITNESSED AT THE RECENT EAST BERLIN PARTY SUMMIT, WITH ALL THEIR LIMITATIONS, CERTAINLY WERE INFLUENCED BY EVENTS AT HELSINKI TO WHICH SEVERAL SPEAKERS EXPRESSLY REFERRED. IF WE CONSIDER THE MORAL OBLIGATIONS OF THE HELSINKI DECLARATIONS TOWARD WIDER HUMAN CONTACTS, EASIER EMIGRATION, UNIFICATION OF FAMILIES, FREER FLOW OF INFORMATION, INCREASED TRAVEL AND ECONOMIC INTERCHANGE, WE SEE AT LEAST SOME IMPORTANT BEGINNINGS.

HOWEVER, IT IS EQUALLY DANGEROUS TO OVERVALUE THE INFLUENCE OF THE FINAL ACT OF HELSINKI ON EAST-WEST RELATIONS AND GREATER FREEDOM IN EAST EUROPE ITSELF. REALISTIC WESTERN STATESMEN HAVE WARNED FROM THE START THAT THIS CAN BE, AT BEST, A SLOW PROCESS, WITH FREQUENT SETBACKS AND DELAYS. AND THIS IS EXACTLY WHAT OUR EXPERIENCE HAS BEEN IN THIS FIRST YEAR. THE LAST NATO MINISTERIAL MEETING LAST MAY IN OSLO NOTED THE IMPORTANCE THE WEST ATTACHES TO FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF ALL PARTS OF THE HELSINKI FINAL ACT, PARTICULARLY AS THEY AFFECT THE LIVES OF INDIVIDUALS. THE MINISTERS RECOGNIZED THAT SOME STEPS HAVE BEEN TAKEN AFFECTING HUMAN CONTACTS AND WORKING CONDITIONS FOR JOURNALISTS. BUT, CONSIDERING ALL THAT STILL REMAINS TO BE DONE, HOPE WAS EXPRESSED FOR GREATER MOMENTUM DURING COMING MONTHS.

A DETAILED STUDY BY THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, ALSO ISSUED IN MAY, FOUND ONLY SLOW PROGRESS, WITH EASTERN EUROPE MOVING FASTER THAN THE SOVIET UNION ITSELF. NEVERTHELESS, THE REPORT SAID, THE MOST PESSIMISTIC WESTERN EXPECTATIONS HAVE BEEN OVERCOME BY SOME STEPS TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION.

A RECENT STATEMENT BY SOVIET DISSIDENTS CHARGED THAT THE SOVIET UNION, ALTHOUGH DEMONSTRATIVELY LIGHTENING A FEW

PRISON SENTENCES AND PERMITTING SOME BETTER- KNOWN JEWISH ACTIVISTS TO EMIGRATE, ALSO HAS MADE A DELIBERATE "SHOW OF TOUGHNESS" IN OTHER POLITICAL ARRESTS AND SENTENCES. BUT EVEN THIS PESSIMISTIC REPORT ACKNOWLEDGED THAT PUBLIC OPINION IN THE WEST FORCED AT LEAST SOME SOVIET GESTURESTOWARD HUMAN RIGHTS.

IT ALSO MUST BE NOTED THAT WHILE FORCING PROMINENT DISSIDENTS, SUCH AS ANDREI AMALRIK, INTO EXILE ABROAD, THE SOVIET GOVERNMENT CONTINUES TO IMPRISON AND CONFINE THOSE WHO ARE LESS WELL-KNOWN.

THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT IN THE UNITED STATES THERE IS UNDIMINISHED INTEREST IN SEEING FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRINCIPLES AGREED TO AT HELSINKI. EVIDENCE OF THIS INTEREST CAN BE SEE IN THE CONGRESSIONAL DECISION TO APPOINT A COMMISSION OF TWELVE MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND THREE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH "TO MONITOR"-- AS CONGRESS PUT IT -- "THE ACTS OF THE HELSINKI SIGNATORIES WITH PARTICULAR REGARD TO THE PROVISIONS RELATING TO COOPERATION IN HUMANITARIAN FIELDS."

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